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MPS Mayoral Leadership Frequently Asked Questions

What is the aim of changing state legislation to allow the mayor to lead MPS?

Allowing the mayor to lead MPS is about one thing only: creating an education system that ensures each child in Milwaukee reaches his or her full potential. By expanding the ability of students in MPS to receive a high-quality education we are also able to achieve a variety of other goals as well such as improving the quality of life in Milwaukee, reducing crime and growing jobs to keep Milwaukee competitive in the global economy.

What would be Mayor Barrett's priorities under a changed system?

- To get the strongest superintendent possible to lead our schools into a more secure future – one who is empowered to make the changes necessary to improve classroom performance.
- To ensure accountability at all levels – the classroom, the school house and MPS Central Office.
- To close the racial achievement gap.
- To respond to parents' needs and bring the entire spectrum of resources – public, private and non-profit – to Milwaukee families who want to achieve educational success.
- To attract and retain quality teachers and get teachers the support they need to succeed.
- To replicate what has been proven to work in urban educational reform – based on quality research.

Where does MPS currently rank to make the mayor believe that the mayoral leadership of MPS is necessary?

The following statistics only scratch the surface of why mayoral leadership of MPS is the right thing for the children and community of Milwaukee:

- More than 70% of MPS 10th graders are not proficient in math; while 60% of MPS 10th graders are not proficient in reading.
- Graduation rates for MPS students are behind those of their peers statewide.
- 80% of MPS graduates who go on to UW-Milwaukee after graduating require remedial classes.
- Data from the National Assessment of Education Progress found:
 - Wisconsin has the highest black/white achievement gap in reading for both 4th and 8th grade
 - In math only NE and has a higher gap in 8th grade and DC has a higher gap in 4th grade
 - Wisconsin has the worst absolute reading scores for African-Americans of any state (both 4th & 8th grade)
- According to data from the Wisconsin Knowledge Concepts Examination from 2007 – 2008:
 - Only 19% of African-American 10th graders are proficient in Math vs. 59% of white 10th graders
 - Only 31% of African-American 10th graders are proficient in Reading vs. 65% of white 10th graders

- As highlighted in the McKinsey Report there are several fiscal inefficiencies which prevent vital resources from reaching the students, teachers and school administrators that deserve nothing less than an excellent place to learn and work.

How will mayoral leadership of MPS affect the search for a new superintendent?

The current system of MPS will not be able to attract a strong, effective and highly accountable superintendent – particularly when the current MPS leadership has a history of shifting blame among the board, administration, superintendent and other external bodies. The next MPS superintendent under a system of mayoral leadership will be free to join me in focusing on one clear goal – making every child reach their potential - and not be distracted by politics of an unclear system of accountability. Under a new system of governance MPS parents, students, the community and taxpayers will know exactly who to hold accountable and be able to directly contact someone to address their concerns. This new leader will be given the fiscal and political support necessary to achieve successful outcomes, and will not need threats of withheld funds or corrective action plans in order to do so.

What successful reform strategies will you ask the superintendent to undertake?

- Identifying consistently low performing schools (based on comprehensive, clear data) and implementing significant turnaround reforms or closing them so they do not continue to fail future students.
- Creating incentives to attract high-quality teachers – particularly to low-performing schools or hard-to-staff subjects and providing teachers with the professional development and classroom resources that research shows can improve teacher effectiveness.
- Partnering with an external research entity that will be established to focus on MPS to help drive important policy decisions and track key initiatives.

Is changing the governance structure of MPS necessary to implement these reforms?

The most important issue in reaching our goal of an MPS with clear accountability, high standards and excellent outcomes is not just laying out reforms, but actually having a system in place where they will be implemented successfully. The current system has been given too many chances to do so and has failed repeatedly. Under the current governance structure I haven't seen a compelling case that positive changes are sustainable. While keeping the status quo is the path of least resistance, it is also the path that is failing our students. The stakes are too high and I am stepping up to demand change – to do the right thing for our children and community – and am willing to be held accountable for that change.

Are the mayor and governor proposing this change in order to secure federal Race to the Top dollars?

The US education secretary has made his priorities for reforming education to improve student outcomes very clear. These priorities are not only a requirement for the \$4.35 billion Race to the Top funds that will be allocated to an estimated 10-15 states, but are the same reforms that will be required to secure additional federal dollars moving forward at the district level. The priorities laid out in all these grants are consistent and straightforward – do not let students remain in low-performing schools and encourage the best principals and leaders to get in the classroom, support them and reward them for helping students succeed. There is also over \$4.0 billion additional dollars that will be made available directly to districts for these same reforms throughout grant funds, many of which are renewable. Moreover, there are clear signs that the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act will continue to focus on these themes, meaning most future federal education dollars will require these same reforms.

Unfortunately, despite the current school boards actions to introduce dozens of new initiatives, it is unlikely MPS would qualify for **any** of these funds currently. The resistance of the current school board to recognize that this is not about a single pot of money is further evidence of the need for dramatic change. The school district needs leadership that understands that education reform does not mean tinkering around the edges and that securing federal resources is going to require a fundamentally different approach. These ideas are not new, they are not inconsistent with the strategic plan, but the bottom line is we are not seeing results.

How can I join the Mayor and Governor in supporting a brighter future for all Milwaukee students?

To get involved visit <http://www.city.milwaukee.gov/educatedcity/supporters2>, attend one of the mayor's MPS open forums or meetings, or contact your local state legislator to voice your support for the mayor.